

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 NSCE-00 /011 R

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TOSEC 135

FOLL REPAT CAIRO 0001 ACTION SECSTATE INFO BEIRUT MOSCOW DAMASCUS

TRIPOLI TUNIS TEL AVIV LONDON 01 JAN 75 QUOTE

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DEPT PASS SECRETARY

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, EG

SUBJ: VIOLENT DEMONSTRATIONS IN CAIRO

1. STREET DEMONSTRATIONS BEGAN THIS MORNING IN CAIRO AND HELWAN. JOURNALISTS JUST RETURNED FROM COVERING CAIRO RIOTS TELL US LARGEST GROUP HAS LEFT TAHRIR STREET NEAR EMBASSY AND HAS PROCEEDED DOWNTOWN TOWARD AKHBAR AL-YAWM BUILDING, BURNING CARS AND THROWING ROCKS NEAR HILTON AND BAB AL-LUK. SECURITY FORCES WITH HELMETS AND BATONS HAVE BEEN THROWING GAS CANNISTERS AND WIELDING NIGHTSTICKS, BUT HAVE APPARENTLY NOT BEEN ABLE TO STOP PROGRESS OF DEMONSTRATORS. AP REPORTER TELLS US CROWD IS IN "HUNDREDS", AND LARGE GROUPS ARE STILL IN TAHRIR SQUARE, SIX BLOCKS FROM EMBASSY. DOWNTOWN SHOPS ARE SHUT UP TIGHT.

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2. DEMONSTRATORS ARE CARRYING PLACARDS DENOUNCING PRIME MINISTER

AND HIGH COMMODITY PRICES AND PRAISING SOCIALISM AS PURVEYED BY NASSER. POLICE ARE APPARENTLY ATTRIBUTING RIOTS TO "THE COMMUNISTS," AND CLAIM PRIME MOVERS ARE STUDENTS AND HELWAN LABOR UNIONS. LATTER REPORTEDLY DEMAND WAGE RAISE SIMILAR TO THAT RECENTLY GIVEN TO WHITE COLLAR WORKERS.

3. WE HAVE NO FIRM INDICATION THAT DEMONSTRATORS WILL MOVE OUR WAY, BUT GROUPS ARE BEGINNING TO SCATTER IN MORE THAN ONE DIRECTION. WE ARE INSTRUCTING EMBASSY STAFF TO STAY INSIDE AND AUC WILL DO THE SAME. WE HAVE HAD CALLS FROM AMERICAN TOURISTS ASKING FOR GUIDANCE, AND WE HAVE RECOMMENDED THEY STAY INSIDE. NO IMMEDIATE DANGER TO AMERICAN LIVES OR PROPERTY FORESEEN AT THE MOMENT, BUT CAIRO MOBS, ESPECIALLY IF COMMUNIST INSPIRED, ARE TRADITIONALLY UNPREDICTABLE.

4. COMMENT: WE HAVE FOR SOME TIME REPORTED ACTIVITY OF DISSIDENT ELEMENTS (PARTICULARLY MARXIST) WITHIN LABOR UNIONS AND STUDENT GROUPS. WHILE CURRENT RIOTS ARE APPARENTLY CAUSED BY DOMESTIC ISSUES - LOW WAGES, HIGH PRICES - IT IS NOT UNLIKELY THAT POSTPONEMENT BREZHNEV VISIT, WHICH SEEN BY PUBLIC HERE AS SLAP IN GOE'S FACE, MAY HAVE TRIGGERED THE DEMONSTRATIONS.
EILTS

UNQUOTE BROWN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS, CIVIL DISORDERS, TOSEC 135
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 01 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MorefiRH
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE000194
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: O: GTWOHIE
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750002-0136
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750183/aaaacvgf.tel
Line Count: 86
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MorefiRH
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <11 JUN 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <30 JUL 2003 by MorefiRH>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VIOLENT DEMONSTRATIONS IN CAIRO
TAGS: PINT, PORS, EG
To: DORADO
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006